

# The Future of Your Finances

By Army Staff Sgt. Kathleen T. Rhem, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Military and DoD civilian employees and retirees will soon be able to make many routine changes to their official pay accounts whenever they want by phone or via the World Wide Web.

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service is in the process of implementing the Employee/Member Self-Service program. DFAS officials project the program will be available for some customers in February 2000.

The officials said defense payroll customers using the round-the-clock Web and phone systems will be able to change their federal income tax withholding; start, stop or change allotments; change their correspondence address; and update information for their financial institution electronic fund transfers.

DFAS officials said the self-service program should improve the processing of pay changes by saving time and reducing the current paper trail. Now, customers may have to wait weeks for action because they must visit a finance customer service representative and submit written forms that have to be processed by a string of clerks, they explained.

“Employee/Member Self Service provides an alternative to completing and submitting forms and will provide reliable and accurate information,” DFAS project officer Gloria Cranford-Bates said. “Most importantly, E/MSS will be a fast, easy and secure way for customers to update payroll-related transactions at their convenience.”

The system will allow customers to make changes nearly instantly on their own. Officials explained that no written confirmation will be received, but members can check changes by re-accessing the system in a week. Changes will also be annotated on the customer’s next Leave and Earnings Statement.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees need to be aware that any changes they input into DFAS will not change the information the Corps keeps in the Corps of Engineers Financial Management System.

“The new DFAS system was developed to speed up processing of information,” said Patricia Ballman, chief, Finance and Accounting Branch, Rock Island District. “Many government areas take weeks to process address changes, banking information, and tax deduction adjustments. At the Rock Island District, processing is done immediately and any changes are effective on the date of processing. Rock Island District employees will have the capability to use the system. However, they must realize they are entirely responsible for the information processed, changes made on-line do not update all Rock Island District systems such as CEFMS, and that changing your address on-line will not change your savings bond information such as your mailing address.”

A personal identification number will control

customer access. DFAS plans to mail letters to eligible customers with a temporary PIN they can customize the first time they use the system, officials said. The letter will also give customers the Web site address and the toll-free number to access the system.

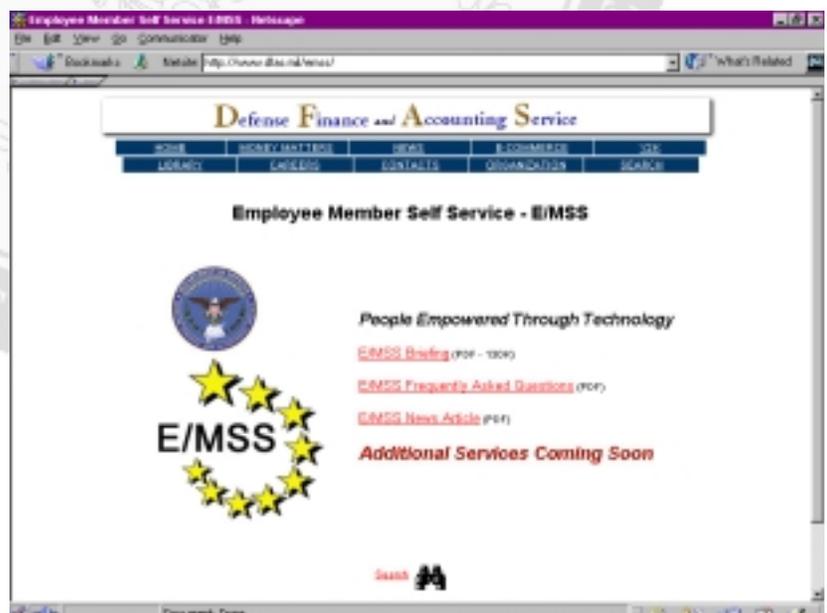
The DFAS plan calls for E/MSS to become available in two phases. DFAS representative Cathy Ferguson said letters are being mailed to DoD retirees and surviving annuitants, Marines and civilian employees, the first group of people who will have system access. Soldiers, sailors and airmen will gain access a few months later.

The military services’ current telephone systems for their members will eventually be rolled into the DFAS self-service system.

E/MSS Internet transactions will be encrypted using 128-bit encryption and Secure Socket Layer technology, DFAS officials said. This will prevent information from being read by others while being transmitted from the customer’s personal computer to the E/MSS Web site. Also for security reasons, officials recommend against using cellular phones to access the IVRS system.

“The system is not mandatory and DFAS does not intend to mandate its use in the future,” said Ballman. “Your Customer Service Representative will still be available to process documents, answer questions and solve any problems that concern your pay processing. Resource Management is recommending that employees continue to have the CSR update the records to ensure all records related to the employee are updated in all systems.”

Additional information can be obtained on the DFAS Web site, [www.dfas.mil](http://www.dfas.mil).



On Oct. 1, 1997, the Rock Island District began providing full public works support to the Rock Island Arsenal as a part of a two-year Army test. The test was completed on Sept. 30, 1999, with the District meeting all Army goals for the test.

The District provided services and business process changes that improved the service quality, decreased processing time and showed substantial cost savings. These accomplishments are significant, and reason for the entire District to be proud of the results.

The test was an Army initiative to determine if Corps districts could routinely support installation Directorates of Public Works. The DPW workload for the Arsenal consisted of providing municipal-type services such as roads and grounds, buildings, all major utility systems, waste management, emergency services, and other engineering services such as construction, demolition, custodial, housing management, pest control, real estate, and space management. The annual budget

was approximately \$38 million.

"The Army's goals for the test were to find smarter ways to do business, streamline the management processes, reduce overheads, leverage outside

resources, and use what the Army has more efficiently," said Dan Holmes, DPW resident liaison, Installation Support Office. "In all areas of the test, the goals were met."

During the test, there were several things the District proved it could do.

"The District can provide full DPW services to installations. It established project management principles for the DPW program execution. Test metrics showed that full District support could

save substantial annual installation costs," said Holmes.

One principal reason for the successes include the supportiveness of the DPW management team and staff. Many cultural changes were "discovered" that influenced partnership business processes.

"I'm very proud to have been able to work with the professionals of the DPW," said Holmes.

"The test was concluded successfully and validated that the Corps could provide all DPW services with substantial potential annual savings for the Army," said Col. James Mudd, commander, Rock Island District.

"I want to thank

everybody in the District who worked so hard on making the DPW test a success," said Mudd. "Your work and results have not been in vain.

Lots of other districts and other Army

installations have taken what we have learned and put it to good use.

"We showed that we could contract out and administer contracts at a very efficient rate - half of what it cost the Arsenal to do it in the past. We eliminated their over one-year-old backlog of modifications and turned this process into a thing of beauty. We have learned a lot about our own costs of doing business and we are a lot better off than when we started on this journey

two years ago," said Mudd.

The District is continuing to support the Arsenal during this fiscal year for similar services. The main functional services include engineering, limited contracting

support and contract management.

During the test, Arsenal customer quality ratings indicated continual improvement in DPW services.

"I want the District to engage the DPW staff at every opportunity and try to help them whenever possible," said Mudd. "We still have a lot of one-stop

engineering work to do for them this year. Let's not forget what we have learned and let's get out there and do what we can to help. We started on this test to try to support the Army better. You have lived this with the Arsenal for two-plus years,



File Photo

A plant operator checks the oil level in a hydroelectric generator.

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*- Col. James Mudd*

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## REFLECTIONS OF SUCCESS

By Mark A. Kane, Public Affairs

and done it quite well I might add."

Results of the test have been, and continue to be, provided to many other potential district and installation partnerships across the nation. Districts include Savannah, New York, New England, Fort Worth, European, Honolulu, and others. Test results have been distributed by compact disc and will soon be available on the internet. 